

**Wilbraham
Senior Center Building
Needs Study Committee
Report**

October 2012

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Mission Statement

The Board of Selectmen appointed the Senior Center Building Needs Study Committee to identify, assess, and make recommendations concerning the current Senior Center in terms of its ability to provide current and anticipated needs of our senior population.

Summary

The Committee has agreed that there is a definite need for a larger facility for the Wilbraham Seniors. We have substantiated our findings in the following report.

We have unanimously reached the conclusion that the Town should give serious consideration to planning and constructing a senior center adequate to fulfill the needs of seniors now and in the future.

Our town is changing and the senior population is growing at 3 times the rate of our overall growth. As of June 21, 2012, the following numbers were provided by the Town:

Total population	14,768	
Total Adult population	12,167	
Total Seniors (age 60 +)	3,711	30.5% of adult population
Total Adults (age 50 to 59)	1,972	16.2% of adult population

Today, 30.5% of our adult population is age 60 or older. In 10 years statistics show that the senior citizen population may potentially increase by an additional 16%, for a total of 46% of the adult population being a senior. Our older citizens are not leaving town. They are aging in place and in 10 years nearly half of the adult population will be seniors. Wilbraham needs to assure that a larger facility is available to meet their needs.

The present center is not capable of providing services for seniors today let alone in 5 or 10 years. It is inadequate in space and ability to make available services wanted and necessary. (See Appendix #1–Detailed Review of Existing Facility). Seniors presently are finding these services in at least 7 outlining area centers. They have been denied access to a program and/or activity due to lack of space availability. (See Appendix #2–Resident Survey Feedback). We presently have no meal site and programs offered have a limited capacity due to lack of space.

Compared to surrounding towns and state regulations or recommendations, our present senior center places well below average in space, services, and programs per senior. (See Appendix #3–Existing Facility). The sample average is 3.31 sq. ft. per senior, compared to Wilbraham’s 1.06 sq. ft. per senior. We allocate less space per senior than Monson, Hampden, Belchertown, East Longmeadow and Palmer and each of these towns has a senior population less than Wilbraham.

We have included many studies, surveys and statistics in this report concerning Wilbraham senior center requirements. (See Appendix #4 & #5). However, the bottom line is Wilbraham needs, now and especially in the future, an adequate senior center equipped to provide health, fitness, meals, social and informational programs for a senior population that will increase steadily.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Lopata, Chairman

Members: Norma Bandarra, Charles Bennett, Trant Campbell, Paula Dubord, Daniel Fitzgerald, Roger Fontaine, William Garvey, Betsy Johnsen, Wayne Phanuef, Fr. Joseph Soranno

What is a Senior Center?

According to the National Councils on Aging a Senior Center is: A community focal point where older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their experience and skills, respond to their diverse needs and interests, enhance their dignity, support their independence and encourage their involvement in and with the center and the community. As part of a comprehensive community strategy to meet the needs of older adults, senior centers offer services and activities within the center and link participants with resources offered by other agencies. Center programs consist of a variety of individual and group services and activities. The center also serves as a resource for the entire community for information on aging, support for family caregivers, training professional and lay leaders and students, and for the development of innovative approaches to addressing aging issues.

Studies have shown how important staying engaged and staying active is for seniors. A Senior Center provides a place where seniors' unmet social needs are filled. Staying physically active has been shown to be one of the most powerful health interventions available to improve the health status of senior.

Appendix #1 – Review of Existing Facility

Current apportioned rented space – 3,840 square feet, Current Senior Center apportioned annual rental \$67,584

Existing Senior Center Space Inventory

Activity rooms (3)	1,843 sq ft	50%	Storage & Closets (7)	249 sq ft	7%
Entry & Corridors	617 sq ft	16%	Toilets (3)	149sq ft	4%
Office Space (4)	395 sq ft	11%	Reception Area	132 sq ft	3%
½ Kitchen	324 sq ft	9%	Dining area	NONE	

Areas of Current Senior Center Accommodations with the Recommendations of the Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs

Size: Design for 5 to 6 square feet per elder. Add one sq ft per elder for self prep kitchens. *We currently have 1.06 sq ft per elder in Wilbraham. In a recent survey, the number one response to what residents would like to see at the Wilbraham senior Center was more space. 25% of the responders stated that they had been denied access to a program or activity due to lack of space.*

Building Services: Corridors should be short and wide to allow wheelchairs to pass. *Our current lobby is poorly designed. A senior using a walker or a wheelchair standing at the reception counter blocks access to ¾ of the center, including the restrooms.*

Greeting/Waiting: Prominent signs in registration area. Coat storage. Seating areas, especially for groups awaiting departure. *We have 4 chairs and no coat storage in the lobby, which is used as a cut through by YMCA members and their staff. This area is extremely congested.*

Lavatories: Typically, twice as many women attend senior centers as do men. *Currently we have three individual restrooms, one ladies room, one men's room and one co-ed restroom. We do not have assisted doors or call devices. When the center is at capacity, we can have 100 seniors vying for 3 toilets.*

Dining: Avoid institutional feel, use colorful décor. *We presently use the Y's community room as a meal site. The number one response to our recent survey to the question "What programs have you attended at other senior centers?" was meal programs*

Recreation & Assembly: Multi use space for meals, presentations, assembly, exercise/fitness, line dancing, etc. *We have no space large enough to accommodate our aerobics class, line dancing or meals. The Y's community room is used for these activities. In recent discussions with the Y's administration, they have expressed their concern over lack of space for their programming and inquired about using our senior center for their activities.*

Lounge & Furnishings: Quiet spots: conversation, cards & reading. *Non-existent in present location*

Auditorium: Noiseless doors. Space should be divisible with overhead divisible sound system. *Non-existent in present location*

Administration: Staff board meetings, special functions space, separate lavatory for admin staff, break room with fridge & microwave, supply storage. *Current supplies are kept in janitors closet, used by Y's maintenance company. Staff meeting room, separate lavatory and break room are non-existent.*

Appendix #2 - Resident Survey Feedback

*In the March 2012 issue of the Wilbraham Senior News a survey was inserted.
A summary of the 84 responses is listed below.*

1. Do you attend activities or programs at the Wilbraham Senior Center? If yes, what?

Summary: *Fitness and Exercise programs were the most attended programs, with 60% responding they had participated in one of those programs. 26% attended Community Education, 25% for recreation, 15% for other, 14% for meals and 6% for health programs*

2. Do you attend activities or programs at other area Senior Centers? If yes, what?

Summary: *40% responded that they had attended other Senior Centers in Ludlow & Hampden. The top responses were: 43% attended for meals, 30% for recreation, 20% for craft classes, 17% for fitness programs, 12% for educational and 7% for trips.*

3. What would you like to see offered at the Wilbraham Senior Center?

Summary: *The number one response was more space, followed by more educational programs, crafts, entertainment and meals.*

4. Have you ever been denied access to a program or activity because it was at capacity?

Summary: *25% responded they had been denied access due to lack of space availability.*

Appendix #3 - Demographic metrics

	Center size in Sq Feet	Town Population	Senior Population	Sq ft per Senior
Hampden County				
Agawam	25,000 *	28,438	7,064	3.5
Belchertown	18,000 *	15,979	2,880	6.2
Chicopee	21,000 #	55,298	12,161	1.7
E. Longmeadow	14,688 +	15,738	4,026	3.6
Hampden	5,500 *	5,139	1,247	4.1
Holyoke	20,000 #	39,880	7,861	2.6
Longmeadow	13,500	15,979	4,200	3.2
Ludlow	24,000	19,773	4,750	5.1
Monson	5,650	8,560	1,701	3.3
Palmer	6,500 +	11,893	2,494	2.6
Average	15,384	21,668	4,838	3.18

New Center Sample

Belmont	19,000 *	24,729	5,308	3.6
Dalton	4,999 *	6,756	1,679	3.0
Franklin	15,000 *	33,100	4,399	3.4
Hanover	7,500 *	13,879	2,704	2.8
Hopkinton	14,300 *	14,925	1,933	7.4
Kingston	7,200 *	12,629	2,668	2.7
Marshfield	12,600 *	25,132	5,143	2.4
Mashpee	10,900 *	14,006	4,374	2.5
Truro	4,300 *	2,003	744	5.8
Average	10,644	16,351	3,217	3.31

Comparisons

Ave. (New Centers)	10,644	16,351	3,217	3.31
Ave. (Hampden County)	15,384	21,668	4,838	3.18
Wilbraham	3,840	14,219	3,612	1.06

(*All built within the last 10 years)

(#Under Construction)

(+ Full Renovation)

Appendix #4

Functional Metrics

<u>Function/Activity</u>	<u>Study Group Average</u> <u>in Sq Ft</u>		<u>Wilbraham</u> <u>in Sq Ft</u>		<u>Deficiency</u> <u>in Sq Ft</u>
Nutrition	20%	2,351	9%	346	- 2,006
Medical/Health	15%	1,763	8%	307	- 1,457
General Recreation	25%	2,938	29%	1,114	- 1,825
Exercise/Physical	15%	1,763	15%	576	- 1,188
Administration	10%	1,176	12%	460	- 718
All Other (Storage, Maintenance, Toilets & Corridors)	15%	1,763	27%	1,037	- 728

Appendix # 5

Study Group Monthly Activity Metrics

<u>Service Unit</u>	<u>Study Group 2011 Individual Visits*</u>	<u>Wilbraham 2011 Individual Visits</u>	<u>Potential Gain</u>
Health	106	117	-1%
Fitness	394	274	43%
Recreation	1,408	282	400%
Community Education	58	16	262%
Social/Lunch	1,436	1,325	8.4%
TOTAL	3,402	2,014	59%

Based on the average in the 5 sectors measured in the Study Group by the Council on Aging, the grid shows a potential increase of activity of 59%. These facts were garnered from the annual reports of the Study Group Towns (*listed below*) comprised of Senior Centers newly constructed or renovated between 2002 and 2011 Given these facts it is clearly evident that Wilbraham could utilize larger facilities to accommodate our large and growing senior population.

*Agawam, Belmont, Hampden, Mashpee, Hopkinton, Dalton, Kingston, East Longmeadow, Hanover, Franklin, Marshfield, Truro & Wilbraham

References

Summary

Wilbraham Town Clerk

Appendix #3

Town Clerk's Offices of listed communities

Senior Center Directors of listed communities

Appendix #4

*2011 Annual COA Reports, Emmett Schmarsow, Program Manager
Councils on Aging & Senior Centers, Executive Office of Elder
Affairs, Boston MA*

Appendix #5

*2011 Annual COA Reports, Emmett Schmarsow, Program Manager
Councils on Aging & Senior Centers, Executive Office of Elder
Affairs, Boston MA*